

# WORLDWIDE READING OF UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

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## **WAR DIARIES**

### ***Beginning of the War Diaries from Kyiv/Kiev***

***Yevgenia Beloruset***

**Thursday, February 24**

#### **The Beginning**

Today I woke up early in the morning and saw eight missed calls on my cell phone. They were from my parents and some friends. At first, I thought something had happened to my family and my friends were now trying to reach me because for some reason my parents had alerted them. Then my imagination went in another direction, and I imagined an accident, a dangerous incident in the center of Kyiv, something to warn your friends about. I felt a cold uneasiness. I called my cousin, because her beautiful voice always has a calming effect on me, brave and rational. She just said, »Kyiv has been shelled. A war has broken out.«

A lot of things have a beginning. When I think about a beginning, I imagine a line drawn straight through a white surface. The eye observes the simplicity of a trail of movement that will most certainly begin somewhere and end somewhere. But I have never been able to imagine the beginning of a war. Strange. I was in the Donbass when war with Russia broke out in 2014. But I had traveled to the war, into a foggy zone of violence. I still remember the very bad conscience I had about being a guest in a catastrophe and being allowed to leave the catastrophe at will because I lived somewhere else. The

war was already there, an intruder, something strange, foreign, and insane that had no justification to take place in that place and time. At that time, I kept asking the people of Donbass how all this could have started, and always got different answers. I think that the beginning of this war in the Donbass was one of the most mythologized moments of the war for the people of Kyiv only because that way in which it was born remained unimaginable. At that time, in 2014, people in Kyiv said, »People from Donbass, Ukrainian Putin-sympathizers, invited the war to our country«. This alleged »invitation« has been considered for some time as an explanation of why the absolutely impossible, war with Russia, suddenly became possible after all.

After I finished the phone call with my cousin, I paced back and forth in my apartment for a while. There was absolute emptiness in my head, I had no idea what to do. Then my phone rang again. One call followed the next, friends came forward with plans to escape, some called to make sure we were still alive. I quickly grew tired. I talked a lot, constantly repeating the words »the war«. In between, I would look out the window and listen to see if the explosions were getting closer. The view from the window was ordinary, but the city sounds were strangely muffled, no children's voices, no voices in the air at all. Later, I went outside and discovered an absolutely new environment, an emptiness that had never been seen here, not even on the most dangerous days of the Maidan protests.

Sometime later, I heard that two children died in the shelling of the Kherson Oblast, in the south of the country, and that a total of fifty-seven people died in the war today. The numbers turned into something very concrete, as if I myself had already lost someone. I felt a rage at the whole world. I thought,

it has been allowed to happen, it is a crime against everything human, against the great common space where we all live and hope for a future.

I'm staying at my parents' house tonight. I found a bunker not far from the house so I know where we will all go when the shelling comes at night.

The war has begun. It is after midnight. I will hardly be able to fall asleep, and there is no point in enumerating what has changed forever.

### **Friday, February 25, Morning**

#### **Air-Raid Siren**

I wake up at seven to the sound of the sirens warning of air raids. My mother is convinced that Russia will not dare to shell the city's thousand-year-old St. Sophia Cathedral. She believes that our house, which is in the immediate vicinity of the cathedral, is safe. Therefore, she decides not to go to the bunker. My father is asleep.

I think that if a UNESCO monument would actually stop the Russian army from shelling, this war would not have started in the first place. Thoughts pulsate in my head: Kyiv under fire, abandoned by the whole world, which is just ready to sacrifice Ukraine, hoping that it would feed and satiate the aggressor for some time. Otherwise, all this would not be able to happen. Kyiv is being shelled, for the first time after World War II. I am struggling with myself. I know slowly the world is waking up and starting to see that it's not just about Kyiv and Ukraine after all. It's about every house, every door, it's about every life in Europe that is threatened from today on.

### **Friday, February 25, Night**

#### **Tense Silence**

The night has suddenly become silent. Just an hour ago, around midnight, sirens could be heard, then distant thunder, perhaps impacts of missiles or artillery. And now – a tense silence. We should be in the shelter by now, but I've already been there twice today, my parents are tired, and I'm staying with them in the apartment for the night. The idea was to be able to rest up here, if only a little. We are ready to leave the apartment and take shelter in the basement of the house at a moment's notice. I find it difficult to collect my thoughts. Different experiences of the day disintegrate into the illusion of more or less the same, continuous grey day. The space in the city changes. The walk from my house to the nearest grocery store, which usually took no more than ten minutes, stretched out, the distance becoming a longer trek. That the store was open at all was a miracle. I bought apples, vegetables, and buckwheat, and when I returned to the area an hour later, I saw the disappointed faces of two women now standing in front of a closed door. Someone said there was another grocery store five hundred meters away, down the same street. But it was not good news for the two women – five hundred meters on foot? The sirens were wailing, and fewer and fewer people were seen on the streets. Even time had changed. On the way back from the grocery store, I learned that today a kindergarten was shelled near the town of Sumy, in the northeast of the country. A kindergarten and a shelter. Seventeen children wounded, two of them seriously. I stopped and leaned against a wall of a house. The day suddenly became infinitely long. Can this war be endured one minute longer? Why doesn't the world put an end to this?

It was a spring day, the rays of the sun played on the walls of the houses and the white walls of St. Sophia's Cathedral. The sirens were wailing again – the signal to seek shelter. A good friend of mine, the artist Nikita Kadan, had lost

his bank card, and the two of us ran through the streets to find a working ATM so that I could withdraw something with my card. One journalist had a backpack with him, with everything he might need in the coming days. We saw some passersby and reporters standing outside one of the big hotels with their cameras, reporting. The second day of the war, as it turns out, is just another step in a repetitive sequence of events. In the evening, I learned that a town in Luhansk Oblast had been eighty percent destroyed by the Russian army, a beautiful little town that was in Ukrainian-controlled territory. It is called Shchastia, »Happiness«. The husband of a friend, who was already safe, managed to escape. He left the town without his toothbrush, socks, and suitcase. On the street, a car took him away. He told my friend that when he drove by, he saw the corpses of people lying next to their houses, doorways, and the small cellars where many Ukrainians store potatoes for the winter. These were »the people of the Donbass« that Putin claimed he was saving from »genocide«.

Happiness no longer exists. I was there a few years ago and photographed streets and admired a hill that dominates the landscape. People in the city spoke both Russian and Ukrainian, I wrote about them. Again and again, I go back to the pictures of the city in my mind and enjoy them, especially the strange and funny self-made playgrounds. Then I fell asleep into this black night after all.

### **Saturday, February 26**

My first night in the shelter. The Telegram channels of the government in Kyiv warn that it will be a tough night and the Russian military will attack the city. But it is relatively empty here in the bunker. Many are trying to stay home, hoping that nothing will happen. Starting Saturday night, the city will have an

almost thirty-hour curfew. It will probably not be possible to leave the room on Sunday.

Our small bunker is located in the center of Kyiv, not far from the Golden Gate. It is one and a half stories underground, to be precise, and is a network of hallways and corridors. They are clean, not too cramped, pleasant, and warm. There are long narrow benches along the walls to sit and to sleep. I like this place because it offers refuge for more than a hundred people. There is drinking water, everyone brings something, the blankets, medicine, and many other things for emergencies, there is also enough food. Everyone who can't stand the sirens and the thunder of the artillery and rockets is allowed to come here. There are also some families who are even here most of the time. At the dark entrance to our cellar, I see the silhouettes of residents scurrying past each other. You can always see small arguments from here.

Two older shadows pass by two younger ones:

»Good evening!«

»But the evening is not good!« the younger ones protest.

»We wish you a good evening anyway«, the older ones say in a triumphant tone, »...because we mean well. And we will continue to wish it, to you and to all others!«

The shadows disappear into the depths of the cellar.

Every day I see my father continue to work on his translations. I orient myself in the now, noticing that the days offer little structure. At some point I visited my parents, both of whom are not ready to leave Kyiv. They want to stay here until the moment of »our victory«, as they say. My father is a translator, he translates German poetry into Russian. Thanks to his translations of Paul Celan, I fell in love with this poet when I was still a schoolgirl. For years, since the Maidan revolution, he has published his translations almost exclusively

in Ukraine. He participated in the protests at that time, I remember calling him from Berlin and learning that he was in the crowd in front of the parliament building. Fortunately, he was not injured when I heard an explosion.

Now he is in Kyiv. He is not thinking about leaving the city. He feels quite weak after a long cold and can't go to the shelter. Maybe he doesn't want to. Every day I see how he continues to work on his translations. Despite the danger, despite the missile attacks, or maybe exactly because of it.

As I write, it occurs to me that I saw many people laughing during the day. For example, the woman sitting on a bench in the park next to two large shopping bags. She spoke to me in an absurdly happy voice, saying that she was waiting for her nephew to help her carry the bags home. »I'm so happy to have you standing next to me now, talking to me. I'm less afraid of the artillery when there are two of us.« She used to work as a museum guide at St. Sophia Cathedral, she said, but now she's retired. She is convinced, she said, that Ukraine will defeat the Russian invaders. »When I think about the frescoes from the cathedral, I believe that Ukraine will be protected by the whole world.« She smiled, tears swelling in her eyes. »We will be victorious«, she said. I didn't know if she was crying more or laughing more, but I felt her courage and admired her.

Is today only the third day of the war? Mariupol: fifty-eight civilians wounded. Kyiv: thirty-five people, including two children. That is far from a complete list. I find it strange to discover myself in this broad, unarmed, almost delicate category – »civilians«. For war, a category of people is created who live »outside the game«. They are shelled, they must endure the shelling, they are injured, but they do not seem to be able to give an adequate response. I don't believe in this lack of response. There is something hidden in the smiles I saw several times today. A secret weapon, a sinister one. I must try to sleep



at last and reach my apartment in the morning. To have breakfast in my own kitchen – that would be a huge treat!

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

***Natalka Vorozhbit***

***Look at the road.***

**Kyiv 28 February 2022**

What should I have taken but didn't? I took money and ID. I grabbed two rings (people in books always take jewellery). But I left the cross on the wall, a family heirloom, and the painting of a guelder rose. I chose to leave all the icons behind to guard my home and my city, Kyiv. I didn't take any of my photos, or the portraits of two Ukrainian writers, Shevchenko and Gogol. I watered all my plants, but how long will they last if I never return? Who will defrost my freezer? I left behind my heart. Grandmother's photograph, still on the shelf. A moisturiser, a new one, I left in the bathroom. I've never even used it. Stop thinking about the moisturiser, you stupid woman, and watch the road.

I focus on the road. What else did I leave behind? I left everything behind. I took only the important stuff: my mother, my daughter and Dyusha, our pedigree cat, who squealed and stank out the car all the way. It'll be 30 hours at the wheel soon. I'm fleeing from Kyiv because it's being bombed by Russians. I desperately want to sleep but the cat just shat in the car and the stench keeps me awake. What did I hope to take but wasn't able to? My husband and the father of my daughter (two different men). My daughter's father is a writer – seeing him holding a gun was just weird. I left my friends, our half-made film, the streets of my town. The chestnuts will soon be in bloom without me there to see them.

What should one pack to start a new life somewhere? What right did they have to take the life I've already built?

Have you ever wondered what you'd take with you if you thought you might never come home again? I've been thinking about it for the past eight years, and more so these past few months, but I could never settle on anything. Death is more defined, you just know that it's the end of everything. But war is the end of all that's good and the start of all that's bad, for everyone. How could anyone prepare for this? What should we pack in order to do ... what? Start a new life somewhere? But what right did they have to take the life I've already built here? No, we didn't deserve any of this. But listen, no one deserves to be bombed, to flee or to die, just because the dictator of a country gone mad desires your destruction.

For someone out there, this was the last year they could have got pregnant. Someone else was just finishing decorating their new apartment (now a shelter for refugees, welcome!). Someone had just finished paying off a debt (now back in the red again), another person lay dying in bed (surrounded by loved ones who will now die on the road, or be bombed). A child was graduating from school (but you, my child, you'll never graduate).

We were about to open our own theatre, the Playwrights' theatre, on 12 March. We'd been planning it for so long: a theatre with space for all the important words to resound. Ukraine has never had a theatre like it. We put our hearts into it. Our money, too. It's all gone, it's been crossed out. Watch the road. Don't cry. We never managed to open, so really it never actually existed. But Mariupol had a theatre. Or used to. You can see the pictures, before and after the bombs. Only you can't tell from the photos that under the

rubble was a bomb shelter, with hundreds and hundreds of ordinary people hiding in it. So far they have pulled out 300 bodies. I'll never tire of reminding people that these are Russian bombs. That it is Russian hands pressing the buttons to release the bombs that fall on us. What is the point of national culture if it has no influence over the people of that nation? What is this culture we think of as great? Does this Russian culture delight you still?

Stop stressing. Look at the road. Look at the road instead of getting upset, I remind myself. But I've been looking at the road and nothing else for the last eight years. Eight years we have been engaged with the subject of war. Eight years we've been trying to shout to the world, to alert them to the Russian military threat. And only after 24 February did they finally hear us. That is the only positive I can see.

On 1 April, the Royal Court is hosting readings of plays by Ukrainian playwrights about their experience of war. We're sick and tired of this experience, we dream of writing, making films, talking of things that are not war. But after 24 February, these other things were closed to us, and will remain so for the rest of our creative lives. We've been condemned to focus on the regions of pain, despair, injustice, death. But also on the mightiness of the human spirit, on patriotism and love. We are ready. But first we want to win, and return home, and water our plants. And we need your help.

*Translated by Sasha Dugdale*

## ***Dear Europeans, Do Not Be under Any Illusions***

***A guest article by Serhiy Zhadan***

*An exclusively for »SPIEGEL Kultur«*

**March 18, 2022, 2:03 p.m.**

My friends were fired at on Thursday in Kharkiv by a Russian Grad, which is a multiple rocket launcher system. A projectile exploded a few dozen meters away from them and then hit the car that was driving behind them.

If they had been five seconds slower, they would have lost their lives. They are not soldiers. They are artists. Popular young artists. Before the war, they had their own exhibitions, lived an artist's life. After the Russians invaded, they stayed in the city and did volunteer work, bringing food and medicine to the city and helping the civilian population. They now came under fire.

It can hit anyone in Kharkiv right now: The Russians are bombarding the city chaotically and continuously, hitting residential areas, bedrooms, schools, hospitals, kindergartens. The bombardment is felt constantly. This is our reality. But the city is not afraid, it continues to live its life. Just now, life takes place under a hail of rockets.

Kharkiv is very close to the Russian border. Russian troops already appeared here on the first day of the war. It seemed that they expected to take the city quickly and with little bloodshed. Russian tanks also appeared on the

surrounding roads near the town on the first day. They were shot down and burned.

### **The streets are empty at noon**

The defense of the city proved to be quite effective – the Russians could not enter the city, and the combat groups that managed to break through to Kharkiv were annihilated. The city was not defeated, as it managed to eliminate a large number of enemy troops. Since the Russian army failed to take the city by storm, it began to attack with aircraft and missiles.

However, in the process, it lost a large number of planes over Kharkiv. They no longer fly so frequently. Instead, the residential areas are bombed, as if in this way the Russians want to take revenge on the city that will not surrender.

The city continues to function. All municipal services are functioning, humanitarian aid is arriving from all over the country, and the civilian population is gradually being evacuated. Putting aside the constant sound of shelling, the city can make you feel like you are living a normal life. However, there are not so many people on the streets anymore. And there are more and more destroyed buildings.

At noon, the streets are empty – the citizens of Kharkiv then prepare for curfew. At night, periods of silence alternate with violent explosions, and bomb alarms go off every hour. The worst hit so far has been the large suburb of Saltivka, a bedroom community – the Russians simply destroy the houses there with their missiles. I have friends there, they escaped death by a hair.

In the morning I talk to a priest I know there – in the zone with the heaviest shelling – and ask him about the situation. »Very good, in fact«, he replies. »Will the service be held on Saturday?«, I ask. »Of course«, he says, »absolutely.«

I don't know how this war is portrayed in Germany, how it is depicted, what is said about it. But several times I have seen Western politicians talking about how NATO will not get involved in the Ukraine conflict. So not in the »war«, or »war with the aggressor«, but »conflict.« This really does not surprise me.

In the past eight years, since the annexation of Crimea, I have very often seen citizens of Germany, France or Switzerland looking for ever new ways not to call a spade a spade. For example, not calling Russia an »aggressor«, not calling Putin a »rogue«, not calling the war in the Donbass a »Russian-Ukrainian war.« We have seen how the Western powers have continued and continue to trade with the Kremlin – while uttering fine words about »freedom« and »democracy.«

I don't know when this war will end and what price we will have to pay for our victory. But I would like to say a few words about the collective responsibility of the West for all that is going on. You have negotiated too long and too brazenly with the perpetrators of this war. You have long hesitated between your principles and your convenience, forgetting all the obligations of partnership. You have allowed Russian propaganda to flood your

consciousness with lies about »Ukrainian Nazis« and the »civil war in Ukraine« or the »social conflict.« You have a share of the responsibility.

After everything that the Russians have done in Mariupol, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, and other Ukrainian cities, I think there can be no compromise with today's Russia. Because this is not a war between the Russian army and the Ukrainian army. It is a war between the Russian army and the Ukrainian people. What is happening here is a genocide. The Russians are deliberately and systematically decimating the civilian population of Ukraine. They are destroying infrastructure, bombing schools, theaters, museums, churches, residential buildings.

This is the destruction of the Ukrainian people. And for this the Russians will bear a collective responsibility. One thing should be understood here: In this conflict, the cities that are suffering the most are those that were still loyal to Russia after the start of the war in 2014. Whose inhabitants felt they belonged to Russia and who tried to separate the Russian people and Putin. Russia has done everything in the past three weeks to make the Russian-speaking Ukrainians of the East lose their illusions about the people of the Russian Federation.

We are not being killed by an abstract Putin, but by certain citizens of the aggressor country who came here for this very purpose – to kill us. There is no other name for it.

The Kremlin can spread as much nonsense about »denazification« as it wants, these idiotic lies lose all sense when you see the bombed theater of Mariupol.



Dear Europeans, do not be under any illusions: This is not a local conflict that will end tomorrow. This is the Third World War. And the civilized world has no right to lose it if it considers itself civilized and independent.

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

***Andrey Kurkov***

***March 21, 2022***

Stalingrad? No, Mariupol.

The battle of Stalingrad no longer means anything! Those who defended Stalingrad have now turned Mariupol into a new Stalingrad. Before the war, half a million people quietly lived and worked in Mariupol!

Now the city is in ruins. On the streets lie the corpses of residents. Constant shelling makes it impossible to remove them. The city has been bombed and shelled continuously for many days and nights.

A half-ton bomb aimed at the city theater destroyed Mariupol's main culture Centre, in which plays were performed in Russian. Families with children had been hiding in the theater for more than two weeks, and on both sides of the theater on the asphalt, in huge letters, the word "CHILDREN" was written especially for Russian bomber pilots. Is that why they dropped the bomb so expertly, destroying the entire building? After all, children are the future, Ukrainian children are the future of Ukraine. Those who dropped that bomb clearly do not want Ukraine to have a future!

In another piece of news from Mariupol, I learn that Russian troops have blown up the city art school, in which about 400 residents were sheltering from the shelling.

Russian troops surrounding Mariupol have allowed two convoys of cars carrying residents out of the city so that they can escape to territory controlled by Ukrainian troops – having to leave must be hard, but for residents who do not have a car, the situation is even more tragic. Russian troops have not allowed buses from the Ukrainian side to enter the city so as to evacuate people. They did create an “exit” from the city towards the east, but that leads only towards the separatist “republics”. Those who take up this option have their Ukrainian passports and documents taken away and are given papers conferring “the right to reside in Russia for two years”. These people are taken into the Russian Federation. I would call it "human trafficking", but Russia defines it differently. Russia hopes to find among these people those who will participate in propaganda against Ukraine, they want these people to stay in Russia, unless, of course, they can be sent back to Ukraine as Russian soldiers. Alternatively, they could be sent to the Far East and Siberia, where the demographic situation is catastrophic, and villages and towns are simply dying because no one wants to live there.

Thousands of residents from the Donbas territory captured by Russia and separatists back in 2014 have already been sent to those inhospitable regions of the Russian Federation. Often with no money to return, they are doomed to stay in the taiga or on the border with China, where there are few jobs and state benefits are minimal.

This war will not solve the demographic problems of Russia. Nor will it solve any geopolitical problems.

In recent days, Vladimir Putin said that he has found, among Assad's Syrian army, 16,000 soldiers willing to fight in Ukraine on the side of the Russian Federation. He already tried to frighten Ukrainians with Kadyrov's Chechen fighters, but they, having lost several hundred people, including the commander of the Chechen-Russian guard regiment Magomed Tushaev, returned to Chechnya. Citizens of Ukraine living on the territory of the separatist "republics" are also conscripted into the army and sent to kill other Ukrainians. Now they have extended the upper age limit for conscription to 65 and are forcing men from the "republics" to go to war.

Why is Putin looking for fighters in Syria and Donbas? Why isn't he sending more Russians to fight Ukraine? Probably because the number of dead Russian soldiers and officers, including generals and colonels, is too high. He is afraid that sooner or later, the funeral of a soldier or officer will turn into a demonstration against this Russian aggression.

In the meantime, up to 80 percent of Russians approve of the war in Ukraine (<https://ru.krymr.com/a/ukraina-rossiya-voyna-agressiya-mariya-maskakova-intervyu/31749739.html>).

This contradicts the German Chancellor's statement that Putin alone is to blame for everything, and that the Russian people have nothing to do with this war.

Up to now, Russian people have actively supported Putin, who is now trying to force the illegitimate President of Belarus, Lukashenko, to enter the war on the side of Russia. Lukashenko has already promised to do this. His

troops are on the border with the Volyn region near Poland. If they cross the Ukrainian border, the second front of this war, the western one, will open. And then, for sure, some rockets and shells will fall on the European Union.

Ukraine is ready to meet the Belarusian army in Volyn, but no one in Ukraine wants to kill Belarusians and the Belarusians themselves can have no interest in the war. Will Lukashenko be able to back away from the brink of further disaster? The coming days will show.

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

## ***Nude Photos and Music for Ukraine***

*Yuriy Gurzhy's War Diary*

**March 29, 2022**

When the news reached me that the Kharkiv TV tower was damaged in a bombing, I couldn't help but think of »X-Radio«, the radio station where I worked in the early nineties. That was my first real job and probably the best time of my life. I was 17 and a passionate music lover, there was nothing more important to me than music – playing music on the radio for hours a day sounded like a dream come true. Even if it only paid \$30 a month, I was happy.

In 1992, our little house was right next to the TV tower, that's where we sat, three new alternative stations. That was pure exoticism at that time, for decades we had only state broadcasting. Suddenly there was this generational change, radio shows were made by cheeky young people, and the people of Kharkiv celebrated us. Our studio had the bare minimum of the technology that was necessary, including two CD players.

### **The musical idea was already there, only the lyrics were missing**

CDs as a medium had not yet really arrived in Ukraine, there was only one store in town that sold them. The station had 16 CDs at our disposal, which was a small treasure, but still much too little, because we had to create our program exclusively with the music from these CDs.

For months I worked every day and sometimes at night – and so even 30 years later I can remember pretty much every song we played back then (because they were always the same ones). »This Garden« by the band The Levellers was one of them, I liked it very much and played it every day.

Last week an old acquaintance from the UK called me. Many years ago, we did a compilation with Phil Meadley of Eastern European funk from the seventies. Phil makes music, his current project is called Gaslight Troubadours. Like so many musicians, he would love to do something, he says, preferably record a song about the current situation in Ukraine and raise funds with it.

Actually, he already has a very concrete idea, only the lyrics are missing. He has already recorded something, namely with the legendary Tom Robinson as well as Jon Sevink, the violinist of The Levellers. If I could come up with something to go with it, he would love it. I might not have believed it thirty years ago, but today nothing surprises me.

If Patti Smith sings her English translation of the Ukrainian national anthem at concerts, if the singer of the Ukrainian band BoomBox mentions that they talked to David Gilmour of Pink Floyd yesterday about a joint song ... everything is possible.

### **Who will pay for Anatoli's photo?**

My lyrics for the song by Phil, Tom, and Jon will be ready in a few hours. I call Katya Tasheva, with whom we often make music, she comes over and

sings along. The song is ready. We think about what to call our project and decide on The Anti-Dicktators.

The other day I met a top American manager who was born in Kyiv and now, in addition to his job in Chicago, coordinates deliveries of medicine and food and evacuations from cities like Chernihiv and Mariupol. Our song is to raise funds for his organization Ukraine TrustChain. And it does; in three days, »Russian Warship (Go Fuck Yourself!)« raised over 600 euros.

It feels good and right to be able to donate and generate donations. As a musician, I can't think of anything better right now. And I see that many of my colleagues are doing exactly the same thing. There are benefit concerts every day. DJs stream their DJ sets and collect donations in the process. Visual artists sell their work – and donate the profits.

Late last night, Anatoli called me – he's 52, comes from Kharkiv like me, and lives in Erlangen. He sounds excited because he just read that Ukrainian erotic models are launching a web campaign: they will send exclusive nude photos to those who donate to the Ukrainian Army or Territorial Defense. »A brilliant idea!« says Anatoly, »I'm thinking about doing something like that too! I'm not the youngest anymore, maybe a bit fat, but I'm sure I can find people who would be willing to pay for my photos as well. Or, what do you think?«

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*



## ***In the Surrounded Fortress***

***A guest article by Serhiy Zhadan***

**April 5, 2022**

People in Kharkiv live in the awareness that there are simply no safe places here. We all have only one goal: to support the army. The city is holding out.

Recently, a Russian missile hit a post office on the outskirts of Kharkiv. One dead, a few wounded. A shell also hit one of the city's shopping centers. The Russians keep hitting places where civilians gather. Humanitarian aid centers, stores, and food depots for civilians have come under fire. Residential neighborhoods without industrial infrastructure or military installations are also regularly bombed. Kharkiv has been at war for two months, and you can get hit anywhere in the city. The outskirts are hit harder; they are closer to Russian positions. But even the center comes under fire from time to time – some central streets were massively shelled just a few days ago. People in Kharkiv live in the awareness that there are simply no safe places in the city. And also within the country's borders.

Recently, a Russian »hailstorm« in the middle of the street burned down a car with two occupants, who simply burned inside their car. »Hailstorm« is the Russian Grad rocket launcher, which can fire dozens of projectiles at once. There is no military logic behind such actions. The only explanation for this planned, chaotic brutality can be that the Russians want to scare the population, make them surrender, make them lose faith in victory and create

panic. However, the opposite is true: people in Kharkiv now live as if in a fortress surrounded by a warring army. Everyone is working for the same cause. Volunteers, authorities, and citizens support the army.

In the first six weeks of the war, Ukrainian troops managed to drive the Russians out of the city, even launched their own offensive, and have since reliably held the roads into Kharkiv. Air defenses also work quite well – Russian planes have not flown over the city for a long time. However, Ukrainian troops are unable to protect the city from the »hail.« Kharkiv suffers from this brutality. It wears down the city's residents – but does not lead to panic.

### **Networks of help**

Many Kharkiv residents have left the city, but a large part of those who have remained have done so in full awareness: to work and to help. A network of volunteer centers, relief centers, and humanitarian aid distribution points has spread throughout the city. Tens of thousands of Kharkiv citizens are participating in volunteer activities, helping those who have lost their homes or cannot afford everything they need. Many people have been camping in the subway stations or in the basements of their houses for weeks and need to be provided with the most basic necessities – food, medicines and heat. It is mainly the elderly who are proving helpless under the conditions of war. The city authorities do a lot to help them, but the targeted mobile support provided by volunteers is often unreliable.

Kharkiv receives support from all over Ukraine. The city is the focus of attention of many European countries, many foreign journalists are there. This is very important – we must ensure that Russian aggression and military atrocities do not disappear from the European media landscape, and we must all ensure that this war ends with a Ukrainian victory and that all perpetrators are punished justly. The pain of seeing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people violently and brutally destroyed must not be in vain. Evil must be punished. That is why it is important that we talk about what is happening now in our cities, what is happening on the front lines, what is happening in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia.

A grandmother was picked up in the morning in the middle of the shelling and taken to a safe place. She is 80 years old and has suffered two strokes. Her children are on the other side of the front line, in the occupied territories. They cannot help her. She had taken only a small backpack with clothes and a box of food from home and just locked her apartment, where she has spent her whole life, behind her. No one knows if she will be able to return to it and if the apartment would survive the attacks. She appeared stressed, but in her right mind. She recounted that she was caught in shelling, and someone shouted to her to drop. »If I fall, no one will pick me up!« she shouted back and kept running.

### **The twisted state of mind of war**

There are hundreds of such stories, thousands of deaths and personal tragedies. They form the twisted, painful body of this war, this tragedy of a country that is being threatened with destruction. But at the heart of this body,

at the heart of this twisted state of mind, lies the will of the people to live their lives, to defend their freedom, to fight for their future. We are paying a very high price indeed for the right to remain Ukrainians. However, we have no other choice whatsoever.

Therefore, we continue to stay in our fortresses and defend them, believing that we will be victorious. We protect our elders and our children. Also our memories. And our future. That is enough to believe and not to be afraid.

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

***Yuri Durkot***

**Lviv, May 28, noon**

The square in front of the railroad station in Lviv has become quiet. There is no trace of the streams of refugees that dominated the scene two months ago. No endless queues of women and children waiting in the snow and wind for the next evacuation train to Przemyśl. Only a few people can still be seen in front of the entrance to the lobby. One could almost believe that the station was operating normally on this gloomy morning with drizzle coming down again and again.

An inattentive observer hurrying to his train might not have noticed a few tents in a small green area to the left of the main entrance. But actually, they are unmistakable. The big gray tent of the emergency management services. The tents of the international aid organizations. Only there are hardly any refugees here. One could have mistaken the helpers themselves for refugees, such as a somewhat confused-looking Australian or an Englishman with his mane of gray hair. If they weren't wearing their red helper vests. Otherwise, both look as if they hadn't slept for a few days and would now like to jump into the shower.

The streetcar squeaks leisurely in the loop before picking up a few passengers at the stop. I hear a woman with a rolling suitcase ask someone where she can find a pharmacy here. It could be that she has just arrived from the East. Or returning from Poland and wants to quickly get some

medicine before continuing on her journey. But this scene could just as well have taken place in peacetime.

Evacuation trains from the East rarely arrive in Lviv. Now it's more likely to go the other way. About two million Ukrainians have now returned, according to the border guards. However, people go back home only if they feel at least safe enough. And if the house has not been bombed. So out of about 200,000 refugees originally officially registered in Lviv, about 150,000 are still there. They no longer have a home, whether in Chernihiv, Kharkiv or the Donbass.

For all those returning from Europe to Lviv by train, there is only one transfer station in Poland: Przemyśl. The broad-gauge railway ends in this Polish town with a name unpronounceable for a German. This technical detail has made it a natural terminus for Ukrainian intercity express trains. There is no time for a gauge change during the war.

It is said that every day many people return by train from Przemyśl, to Lviv and to Kyiv. To Odessa probably not, although there is an intercity from Przemyśl to Odessa. There are no trains from Poland in the morning, though, so I can't really check. The last one should have arrived two hours ago according to the timetable.

Currently, trains are delayed more and more often, so I decide to check after all. The lobby is dark as usual, there are a few travelers at the ticket counters. Otherwise, there is not much going on. At the information desk, there is only one woman in front of me. When it is my turn, I ask if the train from Przemyśl has arrived. In normal times, such a question would not have surprised anyone. But these are not normal times, and my interest must seem a bit

suspicious to the lady behind the glass window. She looks at me with suspicion and wants to know why I need the information. I quickly invent the story that we had lost contact with a family on this train. Then she turns the dial on her red telephone. She didn't alert the police. She just says that the train was on time today.

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

## ***Bucha: Visiting Home***

*Oleh Kozarev, an exclusive for Deutsche Welle.*

**June 20, 2022**

For the first time since the beginning of the war, for the first time since the end of the occupation and the liberation, I go home, to Bucha, now known all over the world. The impressions of our reunion are lurid, contradictory, full of contrasts.

An exciting moment: I get off the bus that took me from the »Akademmistechko« metro station, the last stop on the Kyiv metro en route to Bucha (most public transportation has resumed service in the suburbs). Right at the stop, the first thing that catches my eye is a handwritten advertisement: »Major cleaning of your apartment after the fascists, nothing is too hard for us.« It was easy to predict that my stay would be under the motto of just such a »big cleaning.« Last month it was the motto of the whole city. A little bit of order is returning to Bucha: the municipal infrastructure has resumed work, stores and facilities are open again (even the bookstore!). I first set about the »major cleaning« of my apartment, which was occupied for some time. The whole thing went off without any destruction, and only small things were stolen – I got off lightly. One of the apartments from the neighboring elevator, on the other hand, is badly damaged from a »landing.«

The material consequences of the war in Bucha are selective. In certain places there is serious destruction. Elsewhere, only individual parts of



individual houses are damaged. Certain areas have escaped completely or almost completely unscathed. The impression of total destruction that one gets when looking at photos or videos does not match the real Bucha. But how could one forget that here the soldiers left the burned bodies of the inhabitants? In this city, unlike in the adjacent suburbs, people suffered the most.

The »Module«, a large shopping center in the west of Bucha on the Kyiv-Warsaw highway, has been turned into a scorched wasteland, above it picturesquely the letters »Retail...« A hundred meters away is a smaller shopping center in good condition. Only ten meters separate a completely destroyed pharmacy and an intact, cozy café with a summer terrace and chaise longues. The café is crowded and noisy, the waiters can hardly keep up with serving the orders of food and drinks.

One of the most famous new residential areas of the city is the Bucha-Quarter. Most of the houses stand intact, children play on the well-kept playgrounds. However, the atmosphere of green tranquility evaporates at the sight of improvised »stoves« in the courtyards. In the days of fighting and occupation, when there was no light, no gas, and no water in the pipes, residents had built them. On these »stoves« people prepared something to eat and boiled water to wash themselves at least fleetingly. Serhij, who is showing me the neighborhood, leads me into a cul-de-sac, and it is only then that I notice that one doorway of the otherwise neat house has half collapsed. The damage is severe, but Serhij proclaims, »Just think, no one was hit in this ›landing‹.«

Behind the skyscrapers of the Bucha-Quarter and Nova Bucha, in the direction of Irpin, is a large neighborhood of primarily single-story, single-family homes. This is Yablunka, one of the villages from which was incorporated into Bucha at the beginning of the 20th century. This place has the sad reputation of being the place where the occupiers committed the worst crimes. Most of the civilians are said to have perished here. Everyone I talk to is sure that it was Buryats who committed the cruelest acts in Yablunka.

Today in Yablunka many buildings are destroyed, on the fences you can read notices addressed to the occupiers, such as »civilians«, but also the word »mine.« The worst area is at the intersection of the Yablunka and train station streets – there whole blocks were razed to the ground...

The events of February and March are still the number one topic of conversation in Bucha.

Number one: The words »occupation«, »advance«, »Moskali« (for »Russians«), and »direct hit«, can be heard just about everywhere people gather. Passers-by on the streets often seem depressed and exhausted. There is often something black on the clothes of the people of Bucha, as a sign of mourning for those who were killed.

But there are also clear contrasts. By no means are all the stories from those bloody and destructive days limited to tragedy. Viktor, who likes to be ironic, tells me the story of how there was a celebration in his small street in one of

the neighboring courtyards at the very moment when the Russians invaded Bucha:

»One of the party guests, he was already a bit drunk, heard that soldiers were walking around in the street and said, ›I'm going to have a talk with them now‹. Swaying and wearing a bathrobe, he stepped in front of the door and started to make some kind of speech across from the Russian unit. They could have taken him in right away. But as soon as he opened his mouth, they waved him away: ›Come on, go back inside, we'll take care of you‹. So he went back into the yard and kept drinking.«

Curious stories with happy endings are popular here, which is quite telling psychologically. Andriy, also with a proclivity for irony, tells of a mirror-image case. As he shows me the broken window in his apartment, he points out an elderly gentleman sitting motionless on a bench in the courtyard:

»There you see a grandpa with a sense of humor. I was here all the time during the occupation. When ours finally entered the city, the territorial defense came through first, grandpa was sitting back there somewhere in a corner where you couldn't see him. The fighters passed by and didn't notice him until he shouted at them from behind in Russian, ›Halt! Who goes there?‹ They all jumped in fright. But they didn't hurt him, of course. A joker. His family had left him and Bucha early on, they had ›forgotten‹ him. That's how it was.«

Just as jokes and optimism begin to pop up in many conversations about the war, so too do the attributes of the real, conditionally peaceful everyday life of the constant horrors of war. The number of cars on the streets is

increasing, the playgrounds are filling up with children, young people are enjoying the spring evenings in the courtyards.

Those who return to the city now find it a special kind of consolation that the wonderful park of Bucha has suffered practically nothing. But talking to people we haven't seen for a long time, even in its green labyrinths, on the benches, we again talk about the war. Natalya tells about how peaceful residents hid in a school, Oleksandr had holed up in his apartment. Together they commemorate the dead.

Today, anything and everything in Bucha is a reminder of them, the dead. However, memorials have not yet been created. It is also not yet clear what a future strategy of commemoration might look like. Just as little as the future itself is really clear: Will the tragedy that became known as #buchamassacre eventually turn into a memory? Will it be repeated? It is bad enough that similar or worse atrocities continue at this hour in the villages and towns of Ukraine occupied and destroyed by the enemy. Will the attempt to return to normal life be successful? Those who have returned to Bucha, or who have not left it at all, often feel at the moment as if they were visiting their own homes. For the most part, people look to the Ukrainian military with hope and gratitude. And understand only too well how much will depend on the determination with which the countries of the West continue to help Ukraine defend itself against the invasion.

*Translated by Andrew Stonehouse*

## **PROSE**

### ***Oksana Zabuzhko***

“This is no longer your home,” the men with machine guns tell you. “Pack up, the transport is ready.”

This message can come – has come, countless times, – in different versions. For example, *You have two hours to pack* (or half an hour, or twenty-four hours – a difference, in this case, nothing short of existential). Or, *You are allowed two kilos of belongings per person*, (or five, or as much as you can carry), and every clarifying detail here is worth its weight in living flesh, each smells of breast-milk, of freshly baked bread, of baby hair and old photographs, of the conjugal bed, medicine, dried herbs in a sachet, the candle-wax splattered gods of the hearth – of that entire inalienable life of yours, fed into your blood by several generations, and out of which you now must snatch, with great precision, a few essential elements so that it can stay intact – and it’s already fallen apart! – and you can throw together a new, portable, backpackable home for yourself, a snail’s shell that would keep you whole. This is why it is in fact a very important question, the question of all questions perhaps, one the answer to which will say much more about you than hundreds of questionnaires and quizzes of the five-books-you-would-take-to-a-desert-island variety: *How much time would you need to pack if you found men with machine guns on your doorstep and they told you, get out, the transport is waiting?*

This is not a journey – a journey is something from which you return. It’s not emigration – emigration is something you choose. At least you retain agency

in your actions. Here, the key word is “transport”, because you become cargo, a statistical unit of logistics on a mass scale, like a head of cattle, or a cord of wood. Someone else’s invisible will has determined that you are to be uprooted, like a tree, from your one and only *home*, from the landscape of your tribal, genetic memory, as organic and tangible as a limb, to be transported across the map into oblivion and abandoned in an alien place. Now, they tell you, your home is here – put down new roots. If you can’t, if you wither – well, that’s your own fault.

Should the experiment be repeated on several generations, those subjected to it learn not to put down deep roots anywhere, ever. They learn to avoid becoming one with any place, like those unfortunate souls who had their first love brutally thwarted and spend their entire lives afraid of loving again. The instinctive, bone-marrow-deep memory of the original trauma of being uprooted blocks every subsequent attempt at rootedness, flashes a red alarm: a home of one’s own (and, by extension, the protective concentric rings of one’s village, city, and country around it) is *the thing that it hurts to lose*, so – no, please, don’t make me, I’ll have a light, portable home instead. This way, should the doors fly open and the strangers with machine guns step inside, you could pack, grab the essentials (your baby in the sling, your laptop in your backpack, your credit cards in your chest-pocket, you’ll buy what you need wherever you’re going, hurry, hurry, *the transport is waiting!*), and roll on with the wind, through cold, desolate space, not rupturing anything, no bleeding heart, no slashed flesh, having taught yourself to love not a point on the map but the distance between points, not the stasis, but the transition, not a place, but the motion: the road – the railway station – the airport. You’re up for it – being a nomad, living out of a suitcase, for years,

decades if you have to, blind to your environment, as a tourist is blind to the peeling, flea-stained wall-paper in hotel rooms.

One learns to recognize them – places that are unloved, land that had been robbed of true owners, villages littered with strangers' graves, places under the pall of anemia as if someone had pumped all of their blood out and injected them instead with someone else's, of incompatible type. The new, rejected blood cells are people, and their loitering in these places, among incomprehensible walls and neglected homesteads where other families' ghosts howl in the chimneys leaves an outside observer with a disorienting impression that all these people are, mentally, not here but elsewhere, someplace where, they secretly believe, their real life, their *own* ancestral Golden Age is being kept, with no expiration date or long-term penalties, on ice, awaiting defrosting. This faith of theirs stays with them as the smell preserved somehow at the bottom of their own grandmother's hastily packed (*You have two hours!*) suitcase. Even if nothing else could be preserved, taken along, this smell is forever – there is no home without it. Not even a portable home.

We catch whiffs of it in every corner of the world, at every latitude. The children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the deported, we have spread over the surface of the planet like a new ocean, carrying with us our virus of acquired home-deficiency. We want to feel at home everywhere – and so we have homogenized, ironed out the universe into a few universally recognizable – and therefore (trans)portable – elements: the highway, the gas station, the McDonalds, the airport. We rely on disposable cutlery and cycle through domiciles and localities as we do through laptops and mass-produced winter coats. We have adapted quite well, when you think about it, nothing to complain about. The only thorn in our collective side is this smell.

It can overcome you without warning – it ambushes you in a snippet of an old tune, an accidental combination of colors, the sounds of a forgotten language. It's in the steam rising from a pot of food –oh yes, we are convinced this is *exactly* what it smelled like in the kitchen of our great-great-grand-home, recipes are always replicated from memory, aren't they, so the same food tastes the same no matter where it's cooked. Doesn't it? (The correct answer is, no, it doesn't, but it's better not to know this.) Movies, books, retro-styled cafes, historic reconstructions – we have spawned an entire industry of nostalgia, just so we wouldn't feel homeless. But the smell still visits us in our dreams, and can explode with sudden, awesome force, reverberating through the entire length, it feels, of that long-ago un-rooted trunk – and that's how you find a grown woman, a refugee from the occupied Donetsk, wailing and screaming at the stunned hospital personnel to dare not--*dare not!*— designate her a “migrant” in her new records, because she's no migrant, oh no, *she had driven her own car here.*

And you cry with her, you wail right along, disapproving looks from the check-in ladies be damned, because you know this: two or three generations ago, this woman's ancestors were brought to the Donbas to work the mines, like most of the locals to-be, precisely as official Soviet “migrants” – in a cattle car filled with other exiled *kulaks*. They were lucky – my kin were taken out to much more distant lands, to Siberia and the Kazakh steppes, and the mines they dug there and the cities that grew, like polyps, around those mines are now falling into ruin without any help from the Russian army, by virtue of those lands' restoring themselves to wilderness in the wake of the violence inflicted upon them by men – and there isn't anyone there who might look after the graves of those of my family's members who never came back.



The woman in Kyiv – the third-generation deportee – had come back. By herself. She drove her own car. And it doesn't matter that she was forced to do so – to pick up and go, albeit in the opposite direction this time – by men with machine guns (probably of the same brand as all those years before). The important thing is that she is no longer a piece of cargo, she has “her own car” – a perfect snail's shell, her portable home that she had managed to put together from the land that was never really domesticated – and thus never loved, and thus the land so bitterly, hopelessly, and frighteningly left *defenseless*.

I can picture her driving. Through the rolled-down window, she could smell the smoke of burnt-out fires, the steam of field canteens at check-points, exhaust and the breath of the spring steppe coming to life – the smell of home.

*Translation by Nina Shevchuk-Murray, 2015*

**Yuri Andrukhovych**

**“The Moscoviad”**

In the meantime, let's sum up a few things, von F. You did indeed walk out, no, break out to

freedom from Galya's. You are indeed standing in the rain and touchingly think about unhappy love, about loneliness and the strange cruelty of woman. Besides you are trying to figure out your next steps, still somewhat uncertain because of the booze consumed.

For, despite the gained freedom, you are now dealing with a few newly acquired palpable minuses. First of all, the raincoat is lost. It was left as a hostage there, in her apartment. At any moment she can cut it up with knives or douse it with gasoline and torch it. This would be black magic, a sacred. And now you all can do is go soak in the rain and let your teeth chatter from the cold. Second, the tape with Mike Oldfield's latest record. This is a much more serious loss, for without music, without your beloved music you, von F., are nobody and nothing. Without music you are a cheap son of a bitch, an egotistic monster, narrow-minded self-absorbed piece of trash. With music you are a poet, a genius, a sage and a lover of humanity; only music grants sense to your depressing, erroneous and, indeed, accidental existence, you dumbass. Music gives you a chance to redeem at least half a Nail off your sin-drenched, scoundrel body. And you throw your music around, abandon it in inappropriate places.

Finally, an even more horrifying loss: Galya. Since now, having punched her in the cheekbone, it is senseless to hope for some renewal of relations, for forgiveness and calming down, even for an ordinary human friendship. Her doors are closed to you once and for all. Yet one more time you turned out

to be unworthy of a woman who for your sake was ready for anything, ready even to poison you with her refined snake venom. You will never find a woman like this. Surely she was a gift to you from above. You cast this gift off in the most careless plebeian fashion. Which by the way is nowhere near its end. And you amble towards new losses, in a sweater, in the rain, and Moscow ambles towards you, lame, wet, belching, with its war veterans, blacks, Armenians, Chinese, commies, soccer fans in their red-and-white caps, sergeants, lapsed ex-cons, and peasant petitioners to Lenin. And you are walking with a large bag for the gifts, even though you know perfectly well that today it is almost impossible to buy someone a gift in Moscow. This city is no longer capable of gift giving. This is the city of losses.

This is the city of a thousand and one torture chambers. A tall advance bastion of the East in

anticipation of conquering the West. Asia's last city, from whose drunken nightmares fled the anemic germanized monarchs. The city syphilis and hooligans, the favorite fairytale of armed hobos. The city of Bolshevik imperial architecture with the high-rise ghosts of people's commissariats, secret entryways, forbidden alleys, the city of concentration camps, of fossilized giants aimed at the sky. The population of local prisons could comprise a European nation. The city of granite monograms and marble ears of wheat and five-pointed stars as large as the sun. It only knows how to devour, this city of puke-covered courtyards and crooked picket fences in polar fluff-covered lanes with despotic names:

Garden-Forehead-Beating-sky, Kutuzov-Mound-sky, New-Executioner-sky, Cudgel-Beat-up-sky, Minor- October-Graveyard-sky...

This is the city of losses. It would be nice to level it. To plant again thick Finnish forests, introduce bears, elk, deer: let them graze around the moss-covered Kremlin ruins, let perches swim in its rivers and lakes returned to life, let wild bees focus on storing honey in the deepest fragrant tree cavities. This land needs a rest from its criminal capital. Perhaps then it will be capable of something good. Since it can't go on forever poisoning the world with the bacilli of evil, oppression, and aggressive dumb destruction!

And herein, ladies and gentlemen, lies the task of task, the key prerequisite for the survival of

humanity, and let the civilizations of modernity's great nations concentrate their efforts on this:

without shedding a single drop of blood, without even a shadow of violence, by means of humane parliamentary levers, to level all of Moscow, except perhaps a few old churches and monasteries, and to create in its place a green preserve for oxygen, light, and recreation. Only in this case one can speak of future for all of us on this planet, meine Damen und Herren! Thank you for your attention. (General applause, everyone gets up and sings the "Ode to Joy", music by Beethoven, lyrics by Schiller.) But this only your drunken opinion, von F. And it very well can be totally not coincidental. That is, be fatally unable to coincide with anything. And there will be no end to human losses on this earth.

*Translated by Vitaly Chernetsky*

## POETRY

### *Boris Khersonsky*

Missa in tempore belli

#### 1. Kyrie

Lord, have mercy on us,  
if You are for us, who can be against us?

Christ, have mercy on us,  
especially if our hours are numbered.

Lord, have mercy on us,  
especially in days of war

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison

Kyrie eleison

#### 2. Gloria

Gloria in excelsis Deo

et in terra pax

hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Glory to God in the highest — wondrous are Your works!

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth — more war.

Glory to God in the highest — be not troubled, soldier, nightingales!

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth — bodies flail,  
arms flung wide. People's will is evil.

Thus it has been and always will.

We praise you, soldier, slender of neck, sharp of throat.

We bless you, soldier, who on bayonet raise up the foe,  
We lift on high your long dying groan.  
God is cruel at times, but still better than earthly thrones.  
We bless you, mister General,  
we glorify you, mister President,  
you who have robbed us blind,  
did the Lord trample down death with death for your kind?  
“Yes, sir!” says the General, hand to visor.  
He’s taken an oath to submit to his own dear tsar.  
But his own dear tsar has flown up on a branch and cries, “Cocka-doodle-  
doo!”  
He has a comb of gold, and a log in each eye, too.  
Be glorified in the highest, God, behold not what’s going on down here.  
The bullet’s a fool, the bayonet a good boy, one hit — and no more boy to  
fear.  
With the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.  
Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris.  
Amen.

### 3. Credo

I believe that God is God alone,  
He is Lord of his own.  
He is the peace created by Him,  
He is the light by whom the world is illumined,  
And when battle flags fly, He is their Wind.  
Out of black concrete holes the rockets fly.  
The unseen world attacks the world in sight.

I believe that in Christ this God was made flesh,  
and was crucified on the cross in sculpture and on canvas,  
outside of time and yet within time, outside of space and yet on a hill,  
between two thieves, a kind of earth-to-earth.

But if life is a sea, Christ stands at the helm  
and steers the ship of the universe.

A ship with hundreds of thousands of cannons on board.

I doubt it can dock in the heavenly port.

Christ said, "I bring not peace, but the sword,  
and with it, the chance to lie dead in the earth,  
but when the reveille plays on the archangel's trump,  
the graves will open right up.

And the skeletons will arise and before our eyes  
they'll grow muscle and then a cover of skin,  
and they'll tread the battlefield in delirium  
always, forever and ever, for weather of weathers,  
for trenches of trenches, for tranches of tranches,  
where once they lay side by side, feeding the lice.

And the lice grew as big as typhoidal cows on the kolhoz,  
and the tanks rumbled as good as armored tractors down the rows."

#### 4. Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy, the Lord, God of might!

In other words — God of the heavenly hosts, or of the heavenly lights!

You went out with us to war, you seized the foe by the throat!

You filled earth and heaven with Your glory like a jug with wine.

You let the earth turn upside down.

Hosannah in the highest! We'll see you around in the next world.

## 5. Benedictus

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord in a glorious  
and frightening time, a time of troubles, a time of war,  
blessed are those who walk row by row, each one shall be a hero,  
salvos three and into the ground they go.

And once again — Hosannah in the highest! Hosannah on high!  
The further into battle, the fewer heroes left behind.

## 6. Agnus

Lamb of God, who has freed all people from deadly snares,  
Lamb of God, who has borne the immeasurable weight of our sins,  
Lamb of God, who has counted and pardoned every fall,  
Lamb of God, have mercy on us all.

Lamb of God, Son of the Father, Light from true Light,  
Lamb of God, Savior of constellations, planets and stars in the sky,  
Lamb of God, who crown your iconostasis,  
Lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, little lamb lain on the altar,  
a time of war has come. Cinders rise from the earth.

Grant us peace, we are sated with eternal fire.

They say, “We’re starting a war again.”

Dona nobis pacem. Amen.

*Translated from Russian by Martha M. F. Kelly*

*Published in the Los Angeles Review of Books*



## ***Halyna Kruk***

“No War”

You're standing with a “No war” sign as if to redeem  
the inevitable: this war can't be stopped,  
like bright arterial blood from an open wound  
it flows till it kills,  
it enters our cities with the armed men,  
seeps into our courtyards with the reconnaissance units,  
like deadly mercury beads that can't be put back,  
you can't fix it, except to find and neutralize it,  
these civilian managers, clerks, IT-guys and students,  
life didn't prepare them for street fights, but the war did,  
on the frontline, in a painfully familiar landscape, in a hurry  
at first they only recruit experienced combat fighters to the defense units,  
after that gamers who play Dune and Fallout,  
or maybe if you've had a short-course in Molotov cocktails from a bartender  
you know,  
at the local club while the kids are asleep, the kids are crying, the kids are  
being born  
into a world temporarily unfit for life  
Out on the playground they're assembling Czech hedgehogs,  
and nuclear families are mixing deadly “drinks.”  
whole families, finally enjoying a conversation  
and a collective project—war shortens the distance  
from person to person, from birth to death,

from what we never wished for—  
to what it turned out we were capable of  
“Mom, pick up the phone,” a woman’s been pleading for two hours in the  
apartment building basement,  
stubborn and dense, she won’t stop believing in a miracle  
but her mother is out of cell phone range, in the suburbs,  
where the prefab collapsed like cheap Legos  
from the massive strikes, where just yesterday broadcast towers  
stopped connecting people, where the world got blown up into pre- and post-  
war  
along the uneven fold of the “no war” sign,  
which you’ll toss in the nearest trash,  
on your way home from the protest, Russian poet,  
war kills with the hands of the indifferent  
and even the hands of idle sympathizers.

*Translators Amelia Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk*

moment of truth

there's no past. there's no future.

there are effects of causes. there's a sequence of functions.

there's a plane where the square root of evil  
grows as if to differentiate the whole curve.

there's an equation whereby two opposite  
lives approach zero at best

there's a point at zero, where rain falls, like a god,  
on parched lips. on an empty stomach.

there's an angle that intoxicates. a thousandth that's the point.  
fogged glasses, a bruised forearm.

there's a light where you can't cast a shadow.

there's a bullet, eternity flying toward you

*Translated, from the Ukrainian, by Amelia Glaser and Eran Mukamel*

## Authors

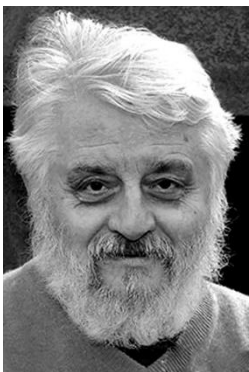
### Yuri Andrukhovych [ Ukraine ]



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Yuri Andrukhovych, born in 1960 in Ivano-Frankivsk, Western Ukraine, is one of the best-known contemporary Ukrainian authors. His poetry, prose, and essays have been published in 20 languages. He has received numerous international awards, including the Herder Prize in 2001, the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding in 2006, and the Hannah Arendt Prize in 2014. He is a member of the German Academy for Language and Poetry and was awarded the Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding.

### Boris Chersonskij [ Ukraine ]



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Boris Chersonskij, born in 1950 in Czernowitz, studied medicine in Ivano-Frankivsk and Odessa. He then worked as a neurologist before becoming a psychologist and

psychiatrist at the Odessa State Hospital. He wrote poetry as a student, but his books did not officially appear until the 1990s and have since been translated into many European languages. Among his awards are the Literaris Special Prize (2010) and the Maksym Kyrijeno Voloshyn Literary Prize (2019). He lives in Odessa.

### **Yuri Durkot [ Ukraine ]**

The publicist and translator Juri Durkot, born in 1965 in Lviv, studied German at the universities of Lviv and Vienna. Since 2007, he has been translating Serhij Zhadan's novels together with Sabine Stöhr, for which he was awarded the Swiss Literature Prize of the Jan Michalski Foundation as well as the Brücke Berlin Prize in 2014 and the Prize of the Leipzig Book Fair in 2018. He works as an interpreter for the German Bundestag, among others. He is currently writing a diary from Lviv for »Die Welt«.

### **Yuriy Gurzhy [ Ukraine, Germany ]**

The author, musician, DJ, producer, and radio host Yuriy Gurzhy was born in Ukraine and came to Berlin at the age of 20. Together with writer Vladimir Kaminer, he introduced »Russendisko« and released five mix CDs. From 2000 to 2006, he curated the music program »Russendisko Klubæ for radio »MultiKulti« in Berlin. Gurzhy is also the singer and guitarist of the band RotFront and founded the Shetl Superstars together with Lemez Lovas. His Berlin party series »Born In UA« showcases mainly Ukrainian music.

### **Oleh Kozarev [ Ukraine ]**

Poet, writer, Czech translator, and journalist Oleh Kozarev, born in Kharkiv in 1981, received the prestigious Ukrainian literary prize of the publishing house Smoloskyp, the Molode Vyno prize, and others for his poems. Translations of his texts have also appeared in European magazines and anthologies. Together with Julia Stakhivska, he is the editor of an anthology on Ukrainian avant-garde poetry between 1910 and 1930. He lives in Kharkiv.

### **Halyna Kruk [ Ukraine ]**



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Poet, writer, and literary scholar Halyna Kruk, born 1974 in Lviv, won the Ukrainian literary competition *Ptywitannia Zhyttia* and the *Granoslov Prize* with her first two collections of poetry in 1996. Kruk also writes children's poetry and prose, and in 2003 she was awarded 1st prize in the *Step by Step* international children's book competition. Kruk has translated numerous works from Polish, Russian, and Belarusian into Ukrainian. She lives in Lviv.

### **Natalia Vorozhbyt [ Ukraine ]**

Playwright Natalia Vorozhbyt, born in Kyiv in 1975, studied at the Institute of Literature in Moscow. She was a participant in the International Writers Program at the University of Iowa (USA) and the International Playwright Residence at the Royal Court Theater in London. Her plays have been performed in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany, Great Britain, and the USA and have been translated into nine languages. She also writes for film and television. She received the Ukrainian Women in Arts award for theater and film in 2020.

### **Oksana Zabuzhko [ Ukraine ]**



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Oksana Zabuzhko, born in 1960 in Luzk, lives in Kyiv. She studied philosophy, worked at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and was a Fulbright scholar at Harvard and Pittsburgh. Since the mid-1980s, she has published volumes of poetry, short stories, political-philosophical essays, and novels. Her work has been translated into numerous languages and has been awarded the Global Commitment Foundation Poetry Prize (1997) and the Angelus Prize (2013), among others.